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HEADQUARTERS  
U.S. ARMY SECTION  
MILITARY ASSISTANCE ADVISORY GROUP, VIETNAM  
APO 143, San Francisco, California

NOV 15 1962

MAGAR-OT (S&A)

29 October 1962

SUBJECT: Lessons Learned Number 33: Utilization of Military Dogs (U).

TO: See Distribution

1. (U) Attached as Inclosure 1 are the latest "Lessons Learned" from counterinsurgency operations in the Republic of Vietnam.

2. (U) The information contained in "Lessons Learned" is primarily intended for use by US Advisors in Vietnam. Lessons may be of value for direct application, or they may simply reinforce existing tactics, techniques, or doctrine.

3. (CMA) This document is classified CONFIDENTIAL to permit freedom of expression and careful analysis of operational methods and tactics of the Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces, to protect US advisor-counterpart relations and to deny any possible use by insurgent forces. Special handling is required under the applicable provisions of DA-DCHI(A) when released to friendly nations. Release to personnel of the Republic of Vietnam will be governed by the provisions of MACV Memo 6, 13 Oct 62 and MAAG Memo 380-4, 6 Nov 62. Sanitized versions of this information omitting dates, names of locations and participating personnel and units may be prepared for instructional purposes and/or official US Army publications.

4. (U) Comments, questions and requests for changes in distribution should be addressed to this headquarters, ATTN: O&I Division, USASEC.

FOR THE CHIEF:

s/t FELIX KAMPSCHORNER  
Lt Col, AGC Adjutant  
Adjutant

A TRUE COPY:

JOSEPH GREZAFFE  
Lt Col, USA

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1. (U) Introduction:

a. The primary purpose of this Lessons Learned is to portray the proper utilization of military dogs in the counterinsurgency environment in Vietnam. Since many successes and failures encountered can be traced back to the training, care, health and housekeeping of the dogs when not on actual operations, considerable discussion will be devoted to details of these aspects of the general subject. Because this topic is one with which relatively few are intimately familiar, portions of this paper will be more instructional than the norm. However, it must not be regarded as an all inclusive reference.

b. Accepted basic principles of handling and utilization of military dogs remain valid. Variations and special techniques practiced in the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) are based on local conditions such as terrain, weather and unit locations. Additionally, some operational techniques apply only in one portion of RVN because of differences in environmental parameters between geographical areas.

2. (FOUO) Present Republic of Vietnam Armed Forces (RVNAF) Military Dog Organization (See Inclosure 1).

a. Sentry Dogs. Seven sentry dog platoons are operational. They are assigned by platoons or by portions thereof to the mission of security of Army of Vietnam (ARVN) logistical installations, Vietnamese Air Force (VNAF) bases and various control headquarters in the capital city. Platoon headquarters are TOE organizations. The unit or installation requiring dogs furnishes the handler.

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b. Scout Dogs. Five scout dog platoons are organized. One each is assigned to the four ARVN corps and to the Capital Military District. These platoons are separate TOE organizations (See Inclosure 2).

c. Military Dog Training Center. A Vietnamese manned and operated, US advised training center located at Thanh Tay Ha, trains handler-dog teams, and retrains teams and platoons as required.

d. Veterinary Service. Two veterinary clinics are operating, one each at the training center and one at Da Nang. At least one enlisted man in each platoon headquarters has been trained as a veterinary specialist.

3. (U) References. See Inclosure 3.

4. (U) Characteristics of Military Dogs. Scout and sentry dogs have only one handler for each dog and vice versa. The dog handler team is trained together, assigned and given missions as an inseparable pair.

a. Scout dogs are trained to reconnoiter paths, trails, routes or areas for the presence of humans. They rely on their keen sense of smell to detect airborne scents which come from an upwind direction. When a dog is working (in harness), he will "alert" when he perceives a human scent, usually assuming a sitting position with body still, ears erect and nose aimed in the upwind direction. From the "alert", the handler indicates the direction of the unknown person, by arm signal, to the leader of the tactical unit. The alerting distance varies greatly according to conditions of wind, weather, terrain and vegetation. In open areas and with good wind conditions, dogs can alert up to 300 meters from their quarry. This can be reduced by intermittent light winds, bushes and underbrush, or rain, to 50 meters or less. Along trails in dense jungle areas, the initial alert often will indicate a quarry down trail, since due to the light, intermittent or zero wind conditions, scents tend to drift along trails. Under favorable conditions, scout dogs can alert on a noise. This is particularly true at night. Scout dogs should never bark or whine when working in harness. They are not trained to be vicious or to attack their quarry. They may be moderately friendly with persons other than their handlers. In Vietnam they are not trained to track a spoor, although they can "smell out" a person or cache in a covered hole in the ground, or a person hiding underwater while breathing through a reed. They can assist sentries when units are at a halt or in position in the field.

b. Sentry dogs are deliberately trained to be vicious, to bark at any person approaching them, and to attack if permitted. The only person they will not regard as an enemy is their own handler. Even that relationship often is a somewhat guarded one. Sentry dogs alert on both scent and sound.

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5. (C/NIA) Training. Regardless of the excellence or recency of formal school training, scout dogs must undergo almost daily formal obedience and realistic reconnaissance training. Occasionally, a dog will become so finely trained that he should be given a rest; however, in this country such a situation definitely is the exception. Continued lack of training diminishes the dog's technical ability, even results in his becoming a hindrance or liability. Training areas must be sufficiently large and varied to preclude over-familiarity and resulting in staleness on the dog's part. Sentry dogs, on the other hand, as a maximum require only weekly or bi-weekly training. Training includes working with attack-suited personnel plus agitation (deliberately provoking the dog, encouraging viciousness).

6. (U) Physical condition. All scout dogs need daily strenuous physical conditioning. Not usually combined with other training, this training often is accomplished by trail marches. The dogs are collared (not harnessed) on the choke chain after the other more mentally demanding training has been accomplished for the day. As with humans, the dogs must be given rest breaks, frequently so when heat is excessive. Obstacle courses also promote physical strength, as well as skill.

7. (U) Food. Dogs are fed once a day. The meal includes rice, beef and vegetables, in proportions prescribed by RVNAF. The platoon is issued the ration in funds (piastres). The food, except for commercial US dog meal, is purchased locally and cooked in the platoon area. The approved daily ration per dog is 490 gm meat (beef, buffalo, etc), 315 gm rice, 175 gm vegetables, 490 gm commercial US dog meal, and 15 gm salt for a total of 1485 grams (1.485 kilograms or 3.3 lbs). Amounts or proportions actually in a prepared meal will vary slightly from time to time, depending on local market prices and availability, accessibility of the market, and operational environment. However, it must be noted that too much rice and too little meat does not provide adequate strength to an operational dog. Clean water must be furnished several times a day. In emergencies during operations, dogs can subsist on meat or fish mixed with rice. This is an inadequate ration and must be used only infrequently.

8. (U) Housing. Dog shipping crates are perfectly adequate for use as temporary kennels when dogs are taken to an area in preparation for employment in an operation. At their permanent base, individual covered, wooden walled, hut type kennels elevated above the ground are adequate. Primary criteria are a dry shelter and a chain long enough to permit the dog to move in and out of the shelter with ease.

9. (U) Transportation. If it is not essential, desirable or feasible that the dog be walking, he should be transported by truck on short trips and by aircraft for long trips.

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10. (CMA) Lessons Learned. The following hints, suggestions and rules are taken from existing doctrine and derived from experience in-country. All of the tactical "do's and don'ts" stated can be thoroughly supported by successful and unsuccessful combat operations involving the use of dogs. Records on file cite numerous cases where dogs have been solely responsible for discovery and capture of Viet Cong personnel, and for revealing ambushes. Their work in route and area reconnaissance has been excellent.

a. Scout dog platoon leaders require a warning order to prepare for an operation, and a briefing on the major facets of the plan. Failure to receive this will preclude proper selection and preparation of teams as well as inadequate provision for their logistical support.

b. Scout dogs should be used only when benefits can or may accrue from their use. For example, if the unit is to make a long foot march through safe areas prior to reaching the area of operation, the dog should not be worked "in harness" at the head of the column during the entire march. He will be fatigued when he is most needed.

c. Scout dogs are of no value in mounted armor operations.

d. Benefit from scout dogs is greatest in operations involving small units: e.g., patrols and ambushes. When they are used on an operation in close proximity to large bodies of troops, the attendant distractions may well confuse the dog.

e. When troops are negotiating trails in jungle or other heavy vegetation, the dog team should be on the trail rather than in an outrider position.

f. On extended operations or in areas where terrain imposes considerable physical exertion, dog teams should be used in pairs and alternated in the working position.

g. When operating in flooded rice paddies or similar terrain, dogs should be on the twenty-five foot leash rather than on the shorter five-foot leash. Dogs normally can negotiate the muck and mire without excessive difficulty. Handlers, on the other hand, tend to become mired. Thus, whenever possible, the handler should attempt to retain firm footing while working the dog on the long leash. The dog should not be required to extricate the handler. A dog in good physical condition should be capable of six hours of work in paddies.

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h. The dog's position, in relation to the patrol or body of troops must be such that the wind can be used to the best advantage. When advancing with the wind, a dog in the lead is practically useless. In such cases he should be at the rear where some benefit can be realized. In a cross wind, the dog may be placed either to the upwind flank or at the head of the column. Handlers, and advisors with the unit, should emphasize these points to the tactical commander. A change in the direction of advance may well be tactically acceptable if it results in better utilization of the dog.

i. When the dog is working at the head of a column, at a flank, or quartering a field (criss crossing back and forth to obtain area coverage) while the unit is halted, visual contact with the dog and handler should be maintained by the unit at all times. Also, bodyguard(s) should accompany the dog and handler under all circumstances when units are operating tactically in close proximity to the enemy.

j. To realize the maximum benefits from scout dogs, the unit rate of advance must be geared to that of the dog.

k. The effectiveness of a dog is diminished, or nil, in areas where numerous distractions or excessive noise are present. For example, in villages or populated areas in the jungle, the dog should be taken out of harness and placed on a choke chain. (When out of harness the dog is not "working").

l. Dogs should neither be expected nor encouraged to track spoor (trail) on the ground.

m. Either scout or sentry dogs can be used to "sniff out" enemy or items of equipment hidden just below the surface of the ground or beneath structures when the deceptive cover is thin.

n. The scout dog's first alert must be observed and acted upon. Repeated failure to do so will cause the dog to conclude that he need not "alert".

o. The scout dog should not be required to close with the enemy, once located. To do so unnecessarily endangers both the dog and handler. Neither has combat power that can contribute to the assault.

p. Once the dog has alerted and the handler has signalled, the tactical unit should investigate and clear the areas indicated, usually by circling and approaching from the flank(s).

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q. Scout dogs may be used on an outpost located upwind from the unit or position. At night, signals can be passed back by using a string between the handler and the unit position.

r. At least one soldier must be assigned the job of protecting the dog handler during operations. The handler cannot be expected to defend himself while controlling and operating the dog. Generally he cannot make good use of existing cover and concealment.

s. If no enemy are located by scout dogs during an operation, commanders and unit should not regard their performance as a failure (unless in fact it was). Rather, it should be recognized that the dogs did accomplish their mission in that they patrolled and searched areas and determined the absence of enemy. Naturally, this conclusion presupposes their proper utilization.

t. Soldiers must not assume that they are perfectly safe merely because a dog is with them. This attitude can only lead to disaster in due time. The military dog is a resource which supplements other actions or procedures. It does not replace them.

u. For extended operations, it may be desirable to use beavers or bodyguards to assist in carrying dog rations.

v. In garrison, daily inspections should be made of food preparation methods, kennels, and dogs.

w. Training areas must be large and contain varied terrain.

x. Daily training in obedience, scouting and physical conditioning should frequently be checked by higher headquarters staff officers, without advance notice. The number of dogs present and reasons for absences, duration of training, quietness of dogs, obedience to handler's oral commands and hand signals, performance in scouting problems, and control by supervisory personnel are the major points to be checked.

y. Scout dogs that have not been on operations for an extended period should be taken to small arms and automatic weapons ranges while firing is being conducted (perhaps once a month) in order to maintain familiarity with the noises of battle. Dogs should not, however, be exposed in close proximity to the firing of large caliber weapons such as recoilless rifles.

a. Demonstrations are a useful tool for acquainting commanders, staffs and units with the capabilities and limitations of military dogs.

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aa. The only punishment appropriate for a military dog is a sharp jerk on the leash. Kicking, beating or otherwise abusing a dog are most harmful in many respects. Commanders should be encouraged to take disciplinary action against anyone who abuses the dogs.

bb. A military dog must never be regarded as a pet even by his handler. The handler-dog relationship is one of master and worker and one of only limited friendship. However, it is perfectly proper for the handler to strike his dog and otherwise indicate praise after successful accomplishment of a task.

cc. Veterinary technicians and handlers should inspect all dogs and kennels daily for general health, wounds, skin diseases and skin conditions, and evidence of parasites. Daily grooming and kennel police, a must in themselves, provide excellent opportunities for such checks.

dd. In an environment such as RVN wherein the degree of sophistication of the military forces falls appreciable short of western armies or where standards or philosophies differ markedly from those of western civilization, centralized control of military dogs must be retained. While splitting a military dog platoon into small packets may produce the advantage of increased availability throughout an area, proper training, feeding and care can be insured only by keeping platoons intact (except for operations) and through centralized control. When distance between a dog platoon and a unit to be supported is great, transportation methods and response techniques must be perfected which will enhance operational use of military dogs.

ee. Scout dogs can become accustomed easily to travel in helicopters and fixed wing aircraft. Many dogs require an initial period of familiarization before they are at ease in this strange environment. The familiarization should be accomplished as training and not as a prelude to or a part of an operation.

ff. Successful operational employment of scout dogs should be reported and disseminated promptly and widely. By so doing commanders and troops will gain confidence in the effectiveness of military dogs.

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s/t DELK M. ODER  
Brigadier General, USA  
Chief

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Special (Lessons Learned)

A TRUE COPY

*Joseph Grezaffa*  
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RVNAF MILITARY DOG PROGRAM ORGANIZATION

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Assignment</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Authorized Dog Strength</u>
1st Scout Dog Platoon	I Corps	Da Nang	21
2d Scout Dog Platoon	II Corps	Pleiku	21
3d Scout Dog Platoon	III Corps	Bien Hoa	21
4th Scout Dog Platoon	IV Corps	Can Tho*	21
5th Scout Dog Platoon	CMD	Saigon (CoVap)	21

\*Planned location; presently at My Tho

1st Sentry Dog Platoon	511th Ammo Depot Co ) 41st Air Base ) 311th POL Depot Co )	Da Nang	9 ) 8 ) 21 4 )
2d Sentry Dog Platoon	523d Ammo Depot Co ) POL Sub-Depot Co ) 62d Air Base )	Pleiku	10 ) 7 ) 21 4 )
3d Sentry Dog Platoon	531st Ammo Depot Co ) 30th POL Main Depot ) 332d POL Depot Co )	Co Vap	9 ) 6 ) 21 6 )
4th Sentry Dog Platoon	50th Ammo Main Depot) ARVN Mil Dog Tug Ctr)	Thanh Tuy Ha	12 ) 21 9 )
5th Sentry Dog Platoon	Presidential Bde ) RVN Navy Hqs ) H&S Co, ARVN )	Saigon	10 ) 7 ) 21 4 )
6th Sentry Dog Platoon	23d Air Base	Bien Hoa	21
7th Sentry Dog Platoon	30th Air Base	Tan Son Nhut	21

TGE QK-103  
(Extract)

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SCOUT DOG  
PLATOON

PLATOON HQS

Note 1

OFF: 1 NCO: 1 EM: 2

Personnel Asgmt:

- 1 - plat ldr
- 1 - plat sgt
- 1 - sup clk/dvr
- 1 - veterinary sp

Transp & Wpus: Note 2

- 1 - 1/2T Trk, 4x4, w/trlr
- 4 - pistol, cal .45

SCOUT DOG  
SQUAD  
(3)

Note 3

OFF: 0 NCO: 1 EM: 6

Military Dogs: 7

Personnel Asgmt:

- 1 - sqd ldr/dog handler
- 1 - asst sqd ldr/dog handler
- 1 - sr dog handler
- 4 - dog handlers

Wpus Note 3

- 7 - pistol, cal .45

NOTES:

(1) Similar to QK-102, Military Dog Platoon Hqs, used for Sentry Dog Platoons. Information shown on this chart is identical for QK-102.

(2) Has been amended in some locations to include one 3/4T Trk, 4x4 either ILO or in addition to the 1/2T Trk.

(3) Per squad.

Inclosure 2

#### REFERENCES

1. DA Fm 20-20, Military Dog Training and Employment, Apr 60. This manual has been translated and published by the RVNAF as ET 27-2.
2. Chapter 19, DA FM 21-75, Combat Training of the Individual Soldier and Patrolling, Jan 62. This manual has been translated and published by RVNAF as ET 23-5.
3. Chapter V, MAAG Vietnam manual, Tactics and Techniques of Counterinsurgent Operations, 1 Jul 63.
4. Directive, RVNAF JCS J3, No. 135/TTH/P3/1, subject: Provisional Directive on the Use of Scout Dogs, 22 Jan 62.
5. Directive, RVNAF JCS, subject: Temporary Directive on the Admin of Military Dogs, undated (1962?).

Enclosure 3